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BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

APRIL NEWSLETTER

April is National Autism Awareness Month

Autism Has Many Faces. So, what does it look like?

Even for an expert, the answer is not always clear. That's because autism isn't just one disorder. Instead, it's a spectrum disorder, a set of issues that can be mild, severe or anywhere in between.



Autism is called a developmental disability because it starts during a child's developmental period - usually before age 3 - and causes delays or problems in the ways a child develops or grows.

Children with autism may have high or low IQs. They may be chatty or silent, outgoing or shy, good or bad students. They may or may not have unusual talents. Some are easygoing, while others have severe behavior issues. So, what do they have in common? Delays or disabilities with social skills and emotional understanding of others. Children with autism have difficulty with both verbal and unspoken communication.

DIAGNOSIS

Early intervention is key when treating autism. A child should be evaluated for autism if the child:

- Doesn't babble or coo by 12 months of age
- Doesn't point, wave, grasp or make other gestures by 12 months
- Doesn't say single words by 16 months
- Doesn't say two-word phrases on his or her own by 24 months
- Has any loss of any language or social skill at any age

Parents should rely on an evaluator with an extensive background in autism spectrum disorder - a child psychologist is best- who can perform an in-depth observation. Expect a lot of questions. A good evaluation is more than just a label.

TREATMENT

There is no standard treatment for autism, and no cure. But many therapies can help. Once parents place their child in a good education program, they often mix and match approaches to meet the child's needs. Some therapies include:

- Programs that focus on reducing behavior problems and teaching skills
- Programs that try to increase good behavior, reduce problem behavior and improve lifestyle

Your BHS plan may include coverage for certain conditions and behavioral symptoms associated with autism.

For more information about available resources, call BHS at 800-245-1150 and speak with your BHS Care Coordinator.



Family Caregiving Sharing the Load

Providing ongoing care for your aging parents can be incredibly rewarding. It is an opportunity to spend additional time with your loved ones and give back for all of the time, energy, and love that they gave you as you were growing up. Depending on the cognitive and physical challenges they have, and the amount of care required, it can also be time consuming and difficult. Sharing these responsibilities with other family members is a great way to ensure they get all of the care that they need while taking some of the pressure off of you.

Whether you have been caring for your parents for years, are just getting started, or divide the care with a nonmedical in-home caregiver, if you feel that other family members should get involved in the care of your senior parents, it is important to be honest with everyone involved. Let your parents know how you are feeling, and plan a way to discuss your needs with your family so you all know what to expect.

Sharing caregiving responsibilities with your siblings is a natural choice, and working together to provide this care is a wonderful way to maintain family connections and create lasting memories. When it is time to discuss the need to divide up the care needs, go into the conversation prepared to offer your recommendations and make agreements so everyone is on the same page.

If you do not think that it will be too stressful for your parents, involve them in the conversation so they can let you know how they feel about the different care tasks and who may be able to handle them best. If not, make the decisions privately, and then share them with your parents so they always feel that they are kept in the family loop.

When making decisions, keep these things in mind:

- ▶ Who determines which responsibilities should be left to the caregiver if there is one?
- ▶ What happens if one person has a conflict and cannot provide scheduled care?
- ▶ Do each of you have the right to bring in additional care or add an extra day to the referred caregiver's duties if needed, or do you all need to agree?
- ▶ What will you do if you notice that one person is not fulfilling his or her responsibilities properly?

When it comes to sharing family caregiving responsibilities with your siblings or other family members, communication and dependability are essential. Consider setting up monthly meetings with the others in your family caregiving team to discuss your parents, their care, and anything that needs to change so you all feel involved and can express your thoughts. This ensures you work together to give your elderly parents the highest quality of life while enjoying your time together as a family.

DE-STRESSING THE WORKPLACE

Stress is an often-overused word that can incite a physical reaction simply by mentioning it.

The American Psychological Association says that routine stress from work—things like long hours, manual labor, low-reward positions and projects – can contribute to mental health issues and even have physical impacts such as an increase in heart attacks.

The good news is that employers can help to manage and reduce employee stress, which serves to boost employees' well-being. And when employees are happy and know their employer cares about them, they have improved work quality, productivity, lower absenteeism, less turnover and better customer service ratings.

Following are four ideas for getting started.

Promote a healthy lifestyle.

When job stress takes over, employees often give up good habits to just get the job done. They may trade in a healthy lunch for fast food, trade water for soda, and sleep for caffeine. Employers can help curb

their employees' self-care deprivation by ensuring there are healthy options available – especially when big projects and deadlines are looming. This can include fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables in the break room, protein snacks, and vending machines where fresh, cold sandwiches are available.

Encourage social interaction

Isolation can be a major stressor. When employees feel they are part of a team, they demonstrate improved communication and can even achieve more with less direction. This all begins with employers encouraging social interaction.

A few simple ideas: celebrate monthly birthdays and/or anniversaries, celebrate holidays, arrange company outings or happy hours, or host pot-lucks to encourage mingling during lunch breaks. The best way to encourage involvement is to choose outings and team building activities that fit with your company's culture. If you are stumped about what would engage your team, have them fill out an anonymous survey for ideas.

Offer on-site resources for reducing stress.

Stress and the physical symptoms that come with it are often ignored due

to the time off it takes for appointments. Even small companies can assist their employees by providing resources on-site such as chair massages, minor medical screenings, and over-the-counter medications such as antacids and acetaminophen.

Additionally, providing a space for moving about on-site and other physical activity can reduce the overall stress of office life.

Promote education.

Despite all of the media talk about stress and how it affects the physical body and the employee as a part of a company body, sometimes employees just don't know what they don't know. Take the opportunity to educate them on stress, how to recognize it, and the signs that it's taking its toll on the body and mind.

Sometimes stress levels may be to the point of requiring professional help. In these cases, your EAP is available to help. Call BHS at 800-245-1150 to speak with your designated clinical care coordinator to see what options are available to you.





10 Tips for Becoming More Active as a Family

Physical activity is important for children and adults of all ages. Being active as a family can benefit everyone. Adults need 2½ hours a week of physical activity, and children need 60 minutes a day. Follow these tips to add more activity to your family's busy schedule.

- Set specific activity times. Determine time slots throughout the week when the whole family is available. Devote a few of these times to physical activity. Try doing something active after dinner or begin the weekend with a Saturday morning walk.
- Plan ahead and track your progress. Write your plans on a family calendar. Let the kids help in planning and allow them to check it off after completing each activity.
- Include work around the house. Involve the kids in yard work and other active chores around the house. Have them help you with raking, weeding, or vacuuming.
- Use what is available. Plan activities that require little or no equipment or facilities. Examples include walking, jogging, jumping rope, playing tag, and dancing.
- Build new skills. Enroll the kids in classes they might enjoy such as gymnastics, dance, or tennis. Help them practice.
- Plan for all weather conditions. Choose some activities that do not depend on the weather conditions. Try mall walking, indoor swimming, or active video games. Enjoy outdoor activities as a bonus when the weather is nice.
- Turn off the TV. Set a rule that no one can spend longer than 2 hours per day playing video games, watching TV, and using the computer (except for school work). Instead of a TV show, play an active family game, dance to favorite music, or go for a walk.
- Start small. Begin by introducing one new family activity and add more when you feel everyone is ready. Take the dog for a longer walk, play another ball game, or go to an additional exercise class.
- Include other families. Invite others to join your family activities. This is a great way for you and your kids to spend time with friends while being physically active. Plan parties with active games such as bowling or an obstacle course, sign up for family programs at the YMCA, or join a recreational club.
- Treat the family with fun physical activity. When it is time to celebrate as a family, do something active as a reward. Plan a trip to the zoo, park, or lake to treat the family.

Seared Salmon with Pesto Fettuccine

Ingredients:

- ▶ 4 ounces whole-wheat fettuccine
- ▶ 1/3 cup refrigerated prepared pesto
- ▶ 10 ounces wild Alaskan salmon (see Tip), skinned and cut into 2 portions
- ▶ 1/8 teaspoon salt
- ▶ 1/8 teaspoon ground pepper
- ▶ 1 1/2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil



Nutritional Information Per Serving:

603 calories, 28g fat, 44g protein, 45g carbs

Active Time: 20 minutes | **Total Time:** 20 minutes

Servings: 2 servings

Instructions:

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Add fettuccine and cook until just tender, about 9 minutes. Drain and transfer to a medium bowl. Toss with pesto.
2. Meanwhile, season salmon with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a medium cast-iron or nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add salmon and cook, turning once, until just opaque in the middle, 2 to 4 minutes per side. Serve the salmon with the pasta.